

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
And
DECISION RECORD**

**MCGOWAN/PARSONS PROJECT
EA-OR090-06-03**

Background:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed McGowan/Parsons project were prepared by the Upper Willamette Resource Area, Eugene District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The project would occur on approximately 675 acres located in T. 15 S., R 2 W., Sections 31 and T. 16 S., R. 2 W., Sections 5 and 7. Action may include thinning, aquatic habitat restoration, creation of snags and coarse wood debris, road improvements, temporary road construction and road decommissioning.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of the action is to provide a sustainable supply of timber from the Matrix lands, while maintaining valuable structural components (e.g., snags and down wood) and habitat for special status species; and treat stands to accelerate the growth of trees to restore large conifers in Riparian Reserves. This project also proposes aquatic habitat restoration and road improvements. The objectives to these actions are to enhance stream habitat conditions for fish and other aquatic-dependent species, and reduce road related sediment sources to stream habitat.

Public Comment:

The EA was advertised in May of 2006, in the Eugene Register Guard, as available for a 30-day public review period. One comment letter was received during the review period. Comments from this letter were mainly subjective and did not ask for clarification on any issue.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

On the basis of the information contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts not already addressed in the *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994)* and the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (June 1995)*, Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Objectives listed on page B-11 of the *Northwest Forest Plan*, and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (2001)* with which this EA is in conformance, and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, a new environmental impact statement or supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Decision:

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment No. 0R090-EA-06-03 and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), it is my decision to implement Alternative 2. This alternative proposes to thin approximately 675 acres of Matrix and Riparian Reserve land use allocation. Thinning in the upland would be designed to increase tree size through time, extend the culmination of mean annual increment, and capture anticipated mortality. Thinning in the Riparian Reserve would be designed to enhance late seral

forest structure by accelerating tree growth. No-harvest buffers ranging from 75-100 feet would be implemented along all streams within the project area.

Instream Restoration would also occur under this alternative consisting of the placement of large wood and boulder structures within the mainstem and tributaries of McGowan and Parsons Creek.

This alternative would also decommission one road, of approximately 2 miles in length. Twenty-one road-stream crossing culverts, 34 cross drains, and 6 fish passage barriers would be replaced. Approximately ½ mile of new temporary road would be constructed with no associated stream crossings. Upon project completion these roads would be tilled and/or blocked.

Decision Rationale:

Alternative 2 was selected because it best meets the purpose and need described in the EA. Alternative 3 was not selected because one of the effects of the regeneration harvest would be the removal of approximately 330 acres Northern Spotted Owl dispersal habitat.

ACS Consistency:

This section summarizes how the selected alternative does not prevent the attainment of ACS objectives, as outlined in 1994 NWFP ROD on page B-11. The selected alternative also is consistent with the Mohawk/McGowan Watershed Analysis.

1. Maintain and restore the distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape-scale features to ensure protection of the aquatic systems to which species, populations, and communities are uniquely adapted.

The proposed alternative establishes a Riparian Reserve (ROD designated 200 feet), a no-harvest buffer of 75 to 100 feet, and retains hardwoods and species such as western red cedar, incense cedar, and pacific yew; thereby maintaining the distribution, diversity and complexity of this landscape feature. Thinning in both the upland and Riparian Reserves would likely contribute to the restoration of this landscape feature as the intent of thinning is to achieve desired habitat features sooner, such as structural complexity, larger diameter conifer trees, and future large woody debris.

Also, this alternative proposes instream restoration that would place large boulder and wood structures in the stream. Over time, this input of large wood and boulders would restore the sediment regime, flow regime, the deposition of gravels, and the formation of deep pools.

2. Maintain and restore spatial and temporal connectivity within and between watersheds. Lateral, longitudinal, and drainage network connections include flood plains, wetlands, up slope Areas, headwater tributaries, and intact refugia. These network connections must provide chemically and physically unobstructed routes to areas critical for fulfilling life history requirements of aquatic and riparian-dependent species.

The proposed alternative would maintain the current quality of connectivity through the establishment of Riparian Reserves and the no-harvest buffers of 75 to 100 feet. The temporary road construction lies outside of the Riparian Reserves.

3. Maintain and restore the physical integrity of the aquatic system, including shorelines, banks, and bottom configurations.

The physical integrity of the aquatic system would be maintained by establishing the 75-100 feet no-harvest buffers along all streams to protect streambanks. New road construction would be located outside of riparian reserves and would have no hydrologic connection to the project area streams. The physical integrity of the aquatic system would be restored through the removal of stream crossings, rocking permanent roads (which may be contributing sediment into streams), removing fish passage barriers, and thinning in Riparian Reserves that would accelerate the development of large woody debris as future recruitment into project area streams.

4. **Maintain and restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems. Water quality must remain within the range that maintains the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of the system and benefits survival, growth, reproduction, and migration of individuals composing aquatic and riparian communities.**

Under the proposed alternative water quality would be restored. Residual stands and no-cut buffers of 75-100 feet would maintain the effective shade zone; thus, maintaining current stream temperatures. None of the temporary road construction is expected to impact water quality as the construction is not hydrologically connected. Replacing stream crossings, crossdrains, improving existing road surfacing, and decommissioning approximately 2 miles of road is expected to reduce road-related sediment delivery to streams in the long-term; thereby, improving water quality at the site and watershed scale.

5. **Maintain and restore the sediment regime under which aquatic ecosystems evolved. Elements of the sediment regime include the timing, volume, rate, and character of sediment input, storage, and transport.**

The existing sediment regime under which this aquatic system evolved would be maintained or restored. No new roads or landings would be constructed in the Riparian Reserves. Although some localized, short-term erosion and sedimentation may occur, the removal of stream crossings and decommissioning of roads would eventually result in an overall decrease in road-related sediment.

Over the long-term, the addition of large woody debris is expected to trap and retain organic debris and spawning substrates within the system. In addition, a reduction in stream velocity, creation of pools, and an increase in habitat complexity are expected to occur.

6. **Maintain and restore in-stream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats and to retain patterns of sediment, nutrient, and wood routing. The timing, magnitude, duration, and spatial distribution of peak, high, and low flows must be protected.**

The proposed alternative would not alter changes to summer low flows, peak flows, and overall water yield; therefore, in-stream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats would be maintained.

7. **Maintain and restore the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.**

Timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands would be maintained or restored. Instream large woody debris maintains a diverse physical habitat by creating backwaters along the stream margin and causing lateral migration of the channel, forming secondary channel systems, and increasing connectivity with the floodplain and riparian area.

8. **Maintain and restore the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian areas and wetlands to provide adequate summer and winter thermal regulation, nutrient filtering, appropriate rates of surface erosion, bank erosion, and channel migration and to supply amounts and distribution of coarse woody debris sufficient to sustain physical complexity and stability.**

Untreated no-harvest buffers of 75-100 feet would maintain the existing plant communities. In thinned portions, this alternative would contribute to the restoration of species composition and structural diversity by accelerating the development of large diameter trees and multi-story canopies. Due to a reduction in canopy closure, the proposed action could result in changes to stand microclimates. This may have short-term and localized impacts on some species until canopy conditions recovers in 10-15 years. Also, the quality, amount and distribution of snags may be reduced by the thinning harvest. However, this may have beneficial or adverse effects depending on the species. In conclusion, thinning would reduce the amount of density induced recruitment of small diameter coarse wood and increase the natural/disease recruitment of large diameter pieces that are more valuable, and often limiting, for wildlife species.

9. **Maintain and restore habitat to support well-distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate and vertebrate riparian-dependent species.**

A no-cut harvest buffer of 75-100 feet along all streams would maintain habitat for riparian-dependent species. Habitat to support well-distributed populations of riparian-dependent species would be restored

by accelerating the development of late-successional forest characteristics in Riparian Reserve areas that would be thinned.

Administrative Review Opportunities:

The decision to implement this project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for this project will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of this project (43 CFR 5003.2b). Protests of this decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

As interpreted by BLM, the regulations do not authorize the acceptance of protests in any form other than a signed, written hard copy that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM Eugene District Office.

Approved by:

/s/ William O'Sullivan _____
William O'Sullivan,
Upper Willamette Resource Area Manager

Date: 6/20/2007